

**CLAIMS**

1. A playback apparatus for optical discs, comprising:

5 a judging unit operable to judge whether a disc region code assigned to an optical disc matches an apparatus region code assigned to the playback apparatus;

a playback unit operable to, (i) when the judging unit judges in the affirmative, play back a content recorded on the optical disc, and (ii) when the judging unit judges in the negative,  
10 not play back the content except when an exceptional playback is authorized, wherein

the exceptional playback is authorized when a combination of a content identifier of the content and the apparatus region code satisfies a predetermined condition defined by a right owner  
15 of the content.

2. The playback apparatus of Claim 1, further comprising

a transmitting unit operable to transmit an authorization request to a server apparatus, the authorization request  
20 indicating the combination of the content identifier and the apparatus region code, wherein

when the predetermined condition is satisfied, the server apparatus transmits an authorization response in reply to the  
25 authorization request, and

when the predetermined condition is not satisfied, the server apparatus transmits a non-authorization response.

3. The playback apparatus of Claim 2, wherein

5 the server apparatus has a playback authorization list that includes combinations of a content identifier and a region code, the combinations each indicating that a content identified with the content identifier is allowed to be played back in a region identified with the region code in the combination, and

10 the predetermined condition is satisfied when the playback authorization list includes the transmitted combination of the content identifier and the apparatus region code.

15 4. The playback apparatus of Claim 2, wherein

the server apparatus has a plurality of pieces of date/time information each indicating, in correspondence with combinations of a content identifier and a region code, a release date/time of a content identified with the content identifier  
20 for a region identified with the region code,

the authorization request transmitted from the transmitting unit to the server apparatus includes a combination of (i) a current time in a region to which the playback apparatus belongs, (ii) the content identifier of the content to be played  
25 back, and (iii) the apparatus region code, and

the predetermined condition is satisfied when the current time included in the authorization request is past the release date/time indicated in such a piece of date/time information that has a same combination of the content identifier and the region code as included in the authorization request.

5. The playback apparatus of Claim 2, wherein

the server apparatus has a plurality of pieces of distributor information each indicating, in correspondence with combinations of a content identifier and a region code, a distributor for a region identified with the region code,

the authorization request transmitted from the transmitting unit to the server apparatus includes a combination of (i) the content identifier of the content to be played back, (ii) the apparatus region code, and (iii) the disc region code, and

the predetermined condition is satisfied when a distributor indicated in a first piece of distributor information matches a distributor indicated in a second piece of distribution information, the first piece of distributor information having a same combination of the content identifier and the apparatus region code as included in the authorization request, and the second piece of distributor information having a same combination of the content identifier and the disc region code as included in the authorization request.

6. The playback apparatus of Claim 2, wherein  
the authorization response is transmitted from the server  
apparatus along with accompanying information that includes (i)  
5 rating information in a country to which the playback apparatus  
belongs, (ii) subtitle data and audio data in a language used  
in the country to which the playback apparatus belongs, and  
the exceptional playback is performed using the  
accompanying information.

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7. The playback apparatus of Claim 2, wherein  
the authorization response is transmitted from the server  
apparatus along with restriction information,

the content includes a digital stream recorded on the  
15 optical disc,

the restriction information is one of (i) information  
that indicates part of the digital stream as a playback section  
and (ii) information that causes only part of elementary streams  
multiplexed onto the digital stream to be played back, and  
20 the exceptional playback is performed using the  
restriction information.

8. The playback apparatus of Claim 1, wherein  
the playback apparatus has a playback authorization list  
25 that includes combinations of a content identifier and a region

code, the combinations each indicating that a content identified with the content identifier is allowed to be played back in a region identified with the region code in the combination, and

the predetermined condition is satisfied when the  
5 playback authorization list includes a combination of the content identifier of the content recorded on the optical disc and the apparatus region code.

9. The playback apparatus of Claim 8, wherein

10 the optical disc has a plurality of contents recorded thereon, and

the content identifiers included in the playback authorization list are content identifiers of part of the plurality of contents.

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10. The playback apparatus of Claim 8, wherein

each of the combinations in the playback authorization list has a piece of exclusion information attached thereto indicating whether an exceptional playback of a content  
20 identified with the content identifier in the combination is exclusive or non-exclusive,

the exceptional playback is exclusive when an authorization for exceptional playback is provided exclusively for contents recorded on an optical disc to which the region  
25 code in the combination is assigned, and

the exceptional playback is non-exclusive when an authorization for exceptional playback is provided also for one or more other contents that are recorded on another optical disc to which another region code besides the region code in the combination is assigned.

11. The playback apparatus of Claim 1, wherein

the playback apparatus has a playback authorization list that includes a plurality of pieces of date/time information each indicating (i) a content identifier of a content, (ii) a region code that identifies a region in which the content is sold, and (iii) a release date/time of the content in the identified region, and

the predetermined condition is satisfied when a current time is past the release date/time indicated in such a piece of date/time information that includes the combination of the content identifier of the content and the apparatus region code.

12. The playback apparatus of Claim 1, wherein

the playback apparatus has a playback authorization list that includes a plurality of pieces of distributor information each indicating, in correspondence with combinations of a content identifier and a region code, a distributor for a region identified with the region code, and

the predetermined condition is satisfied when a

distributor indicated in such a piece of distributor information that includes the combination of the content identifier of the content and the apparatus region code matches a distributor indicated in such a piece of distributor information that includes a combination of the content identifier of the content and the disc region code.

13. The playback apparatus of Claim 1, wherein  
an exception schedule flag is recorded on the optical  
10 disc,

the playback apparatus performs the exceptional playback when the exception schedule flag indicates that the optical disc is allowed to be played back, and

the playback apparatus does not perform the exceptional  
15 playback when the exception schedule flag indicates that the optical disc is prohibited from being played back.

14. The playback apparatus of Claim 1, further comprising  
a downloading unit operable to download a piece of meta  
20 data from a data base server located in a network, by transmitting a piece of information about the content to the data base server,  
wherein

the content identifier is in the piece of meta data.

25 15. A server apparatus comprising:

a storing unit storing therein a playback authorization management table that includes combinations of a content identifier and a region code, the combinations each indicating that a content identified with the content identifier is allowed  
5 to be played back in a region identified with the region code in the combination;

a receiving unit operable to receive an authorization request transmitted from a playback apparatus;

a judging unit operable to obtain, out of the authorization  
10 request, a region code of a region to which the playback apparatus belongs and a content identifier of a content that is requested to be played back and judge whether the obtained combination of the content identifier and the region code exists in the playback authorization management table; and

15 a transmitting unit operable to, when the combination exists in the playback authorization management table, transmit an authorization response to the playback apparatus.

16. The server apparatus of Claim 15, further comprising:

20 a search unit operable to search for a management server that manages the playback apparatus, based on the region code included in the authorization request; and

a transmission controlling unit operable to cause the management server found in the search to transmit, to the playback  
25 apparatus, one of (i) subtitle data suitable for the region to



which the playback apparatus belongs and (ii) a playback control application.

17. A program that has a computer execute playback processing  
5 of optical discs, comprising:

a judging step of judging whether a disc region code assigned to an optical disc matches an apparatus region code assigned to a playback apparatus;

a playback step of (i) when the judging step judges in  
10 the affirmative, having the computer playback a content recorded on the optical disc and (ii) when the judging step judges in the negative; not having the computer playback the content except when an exceptional playback is authorized, wherein

the exceptional playback is authorized when a combination  
15 of a content identifier of the content and the apparatus region code satisfies a predetermined condition defined by a right owner of the content.

18. A system integrated circuit to be incorporated into a  
20 playback apparatus, the system integrated circuit comprising:

a judging unit operable to judge whether a disc region code assigned to an optical disc matches an apparatus region code assigned to the playback apparatus;

a playback unit operable to, (i) when the judging unit  
25 judges in the affirmative, have the playback apparatus play back

a content recorded on the optical disc, and (ii) when the judging unit judges in the negative, not have the playback apparatus play back the content except when an exceptional playback is authorized, wherein

- 5           the exceptional playback is authorized when a combination of a content identifier of the content and the apparatus region code satisfies a predetermined condition defined by a right owner of the content.